New York University  
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication  
Culture and Media in Urban China  
MCC-UE 1310.001

Lily Chumley  
Dept. of Media, Culture, and Communication  
239 Greene Street, 7th Fl  
chumley@nyu.edu

Classroom location: TBD  
Class meeting times: TBD

Course Overview
China has long been described as a “rural” nation—according to widely cited UN urbanization statistics, only 40 percent of Chinese people live in “cities,” compared with 80 percent of Americans. But in China, there are at least 20 municipalities as large as New York (with more than 8 million people), and Chinese “small towns” are often denser, busier and taller than American “cities.” Urbanity is rapidly spreading in China, as new towns appear and old cities grow, and rural people increasingly spend years or decades working in urban centers. “Civilized” (wenming) urbanity is an object of desire, for individuals and for the state, but contemporary urban life is also frequently depicted in terms of post-socialist alienation and commodified vice.[1]

Course Description
What does it mean to be “urban” in China and how is Chinese urbanism mediated by new cultural formations? In this course we will examine the culture and media that define city life in China, including Chinese state and popular media, television and film, music, fashion, verbal art and literature (in print and online) and visual art. We will focus on the period from the building booms of the mid-to-late nineties to the present. Students will work in teams to make presentations on urban culture, and use primary sources in translation and secondary sources to write individual essays. Chinese language ability appreciated but by no means required.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
-- Identify key aspects of the cultural life and political economy of the People’s Republic of China.
--Describe distinctive aspects of urban life, culture, and media in China.
--Apply theoretical concepts of cultural analysis, urban theory, political economic theory, and media studies to the study of China.
--Analyze concepts of public space and public/private in the Chinese context.
--Compare differences between American and Chinese urban culture.
--Develop research abilities and approaches through in-depth individual research projects.
Course Details
Over the first four weeks, we will discuss Chinese urbanization and its role in the history of post-socialist “reform and opening up,” the urban/rural divide, policies promoting urbanization, Beijing and Shanghai as antipodal models of urbanity, space, and changing family relations. In week 5, students will divide into groups of 4, and give presentations on various aspects of urban culture. In weeks 6-7, we will look at urban life in China thematically, focusing on different aspects of the city: work, the regulation of desire, conspicuous consumption, “guanxi” and “face”. In week 8, we will return to the rural, considering the discursive roles of the image of the “farmer” in the urban China, in recent film, television and propaganda. In weeks 9-15, we will look at specific media formations and their role in creating urban culture: film, visual art, independent music, literary and popular publishing, as well as propaganda and state media, examining issues of “public spheres” and censorship.

Throughout the term, students will be reading and conducting research in preparation for the group presentation and individual research proposals, and will be expected to draw on their growing knowledge in class discussions. At the end of the term readings will become progressively lighter, with an increasing focus on multi-media sources, such as film, music, art, webpages, etc. Readings will introduce students to an array of theoretical approaches to the city, although we will not be reading “theory” as such. Class discussions and the research project will encourage students to think about methodology: finding a topic at a distance, defining a fieldsite within the city, and analyzing different kinds of “texts,” from news articles to statistics, from websites to pop songs. At the end of the course, we will gather the group presentations together into a reference booklet on Chinese urbanization.

This class is appropriate for students with a variety of linguistic and academic backgrounds. For students who are not familiar with China, this class will serve as a basic introduction to China. Students with little or no Chinese ability will conduct research for their teams using sources such as English-language ethnographies and other academic sources, as well as government websites, journalism, visual art, photoblogs and films with English subtitles. Students who are familiar with China and/or a Chinese language can use this class as an opportunity to develop their own projects and to practice conducting research in Chinese (students with native or second-year Chinese will be expected to make use of at least one Chinese-language text in each assignment).

Required Texts


*All other readings will be made available on Blackboard.
Assignments

Week 3: Group Presentations Each group will give a 20-minute presentation on some form of culture or media that is important in the city, drawing from widely available materials, such as news about events in cities around China (topics will be selected in consultation with the teacher). Presentations should use Powerpoint; please include relevant images/sound. The most essential part of this assignment, however, is not the presentation but the bibliography: in addition to a list of references cited, the group will put together a 3-4 page bibliography for further reading on the topic (1 page per person in the group). The bibliography is a list of citations—students are not expected to have read the works listed at this point.

Week 9: Research Proposals: Over the next six weeks, each student will choose texts from the group bibliography and use this reading to develop a 2-3 page proposal for a research project on a particular event/organization/art form/media outlet/place/phenomenon/industry etc. In Weeks 5 and 7, the teacher will meet with each group to discuss their progress. Individual research proposals are due in class in Week 9.

Final: Essay: Each student will write a 10-12 page essay based on his/her research proposal, analyzing primary sources (in English or Chinese depending on ability) such as newspapers, magazines, blogs and websites, advertisements, propaganda campaigns, films or short stories, artworks or songs.

Extra Credit: Film: Chinese films (many with English subtitles) will be available with the instructor.

Evaluation
25% City Report + Presentation
25% Group Proposal + Presentation
25% Final (Individual) Essay
25% Preparation, Attendance and Participation

Evaluation Rubric
A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B=Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.
C=Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F=Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments.

A = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 65-69
D = 60-64
F = 0-59

COURSE POLICIES
Absences and Lateness
More than two unexcused absences will automatically result in a lower grade. Chronic lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence you will be responsible for any missed work. Travel arrangements do not constitute a valid excuse for rescheduling exams. There are no extra credit assignments for this class.

Format
Please type and double-space your written work. Typing improves the clarity and readability of your work and double-spacing allows room for me to comment. Please also number and staple multiple pages. You are free to use your preferred citation style. Please use it consistently throughout your writing. If sending a document electronically, please name the file in the following format Yourlastname Coursenumber Assignment1.doc

Grade Appeals
Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short
but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

**General Decorum**
Slipping in late or leaving early, sleeping, text messaging, surfing the Internet, doing homework in class, eating, etc. are distracting and disrespectful to all participants in the course.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity
The relationship between students and faculty is the keystone of the educational experience at New York University in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. This relationship takes an honor code for granted and mutual trust, respect, and responsibility as foundational requirements. Thus, how you learn is as important as what you learn. A university education aims not only to produce high-quality scholars, but to also cultivate honorable citizens.

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you
- cheat on an exam,
- submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors,
- receive help on a takehome examination that calls for independent work, or
- plagiarize.

Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning, and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following:
- copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media;
- download documents from the Internet;
- purchase documents;
- report from other’s oral work;
- paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or
- copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Your professors are responsible for helping you to understand other people's ideas, to use resources and conscientiously acknowledge them, and to develop and clarify your own
thinking. You should know what constitutes good and honest scholarship, style guide preferences, and formats for assignments for each of your courses. Consult your professors for help with problems related to fulfilling course assignments, including questions related to attribution of sources.

Through reading, writing, and discussion, you will undoubtedly acquire ideas from others, and exchange ideas and opinions with others, including your classmates and professors. You will be expected, and often required, to build your own work on that of other people. In so doing, you are expected to credit those sources that have contributed to the development of your ideas.

Avoiding Academic Dishonesty

- Organize your time appropriately to avoid undue pressure, and acquire good study habits, including note taking.
- Learn proper forms of citation. Always check with your professors of record for their preferred style guides. Directly copied material must always be in quotes; paraphrased material must be acknowledged; even ideas and organization derived from your own previous work or another's work need to be acknowledged.
- Always proofread your finished work to be sure that quotation marks, footnotes and other references were not inadvertently omitted. Know the source of each citation.
- Do not submit the same work for more than one class without first obtaining the permission of both professors even if you believe that work you have already completed satisfies the requirements of another assignment.
- Save your notes and drafts of your papers as evidence of your original work.

Disciplinary Sanctions

When a professor suspects cheating, plagiarism, and/or other forms of academic dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken following the department procedure or through referral to the Committee on Student Discipline.

Departmental Procedure

- The Professor will meet with the student to discuss, and present evidence for the particular violation, giving the student opportunity to refute or deny the charge(s).
- If the Professor confirms the violation(s), he/she, in consultation with the Program Director and Department Chair may take any of the following actions:
  - Allow the student to redo the assignment
  - Lower the grade for the work in question
  - Assign a grade of F for the work in question
  - Assign a grade of F for the course
  - Recommend dismissal

Once an action(s) is taken, the Professor will inform the Program Director and Department Chair, and inform the student in writing, instructing the student to schedule
an appointment with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, as a final step. Copies of the letter will be sent to the Department Chair for his/her confidential student file and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. The student has the right to appeal the action taken in accordance with the School's Student Complaint Procedure as outlined in The Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development Student's Guide.

**Referral to the Steinhardt Committee on Student Discipline**

In cases when dismissal is recommended, and in cases of repeated violations and/or unusual circumstances, faculty may choose to refer the issue to the Committee on Student Discipline for resolution, which they may do through the Office of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

The Steinhardt School Statement on Academic Integrity is consistent with the New York University Policy on Student Conduct, published in the NYU Student Guide.

**STUDENT RESOURCES**

- Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

- Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at www.rich15.com/nyu/ or just walk-in.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1: Urbanization**

Day 1: Introduction to the Class. Mini-Lecture: Definitions of the urban and rural; problem with comparative statistics; ancient Chinese urbanity; contemporary urbanization and the push away from the agricultural economy, 1980-present.

  - In-class readings: *Urban World: Harmonious Cities: China and India in Focus* UN Habitat No. 1 2008
  - “Re-examining China’s Urban Concept and the Level of Urbanization” L. Zhang and Simon Zhao, *China Quarterly* 1998
Day 2: Urban-Rural Migration: Going to the country during the Cultural Revolution; coming to the city in the Reform Era; the Urban-Rural Divide

Choose Groups
Film: “Little Wu”

Week 2: People and Stone: Models and Types of Chinese City

Day 1: Old City Walls and New City Sprawl
Reading: Li Zhang, Strangers in the City Chapter 2
Newspaper articles on the decade-long construction boom (and crash)

Day 2: Beijing and Shanghai: Cultural/Political Center and Financial Center
Lecture on Beijing’s expansion/ transformation and ongoing political and cultural centrality; on Shanghai’s colonial history and role in Chinese imagination, as well as contemporary role in Chinese economy
Wu Hong, Remaking Beijing 1995 (PDF, selections)
Tang Xiaobing, Chinese Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian Chapter 5, “Shanghai 1930” (PDF)

Film: “Beijing Bicycle”

Week 3: Social Divisions

Day 1: The Social Division of Cities: Cities as sites of (cultural, class, regional, and linguistic) heterogeneity
Bian, Yanjie. “Chinese Social Stratification and Social Mobility” Annual Review of Sociology Vol. 28 2002
Zhang, Qing. “A Chinese Yuppie in Beijing: Phonological Variation and the Construction of a New Professional Identity” Language in Society 34 2005

Day 2: Gender and Generation: 21st Century Family Relations
L. Zhang, Strangers in the City Ch. 5: Reconfigurations of Gender, Work and Household

Film: “If you’ve got something to say, say it!”

**Week 4: Public and Private, Spaces and Places**

**Day 1:** Intimacy, privacy and alienation: residence patterns in old-style houses, dormitories and high-rise apartment buildings
   Reading: D. Fraser, “Inventing Oasis” in Davis ed. 2000, *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China*; China Times articles on construction booms; real estate websites

**Day 2:** Public Place: Street, mall, bus stop, park
   Slide Show: Artist Zhou Biao’s “coming home” series
   Film: “Cell Phone”

**Week 5: Group Presentations**

Day 1: Groups 1, 2
Day 2: Groups 3, 4

**Week 6: Work and Play**

**Day 1:** Dagong: Living just enough for the city
   Reading: Pun N. “Becoming Dagongmei (working girls)” *China Journal* 42 1999
   In class watch TV Excerpt: Song and Dance tribute to *nongmingong* (workers from the country) in the 2008 CCTV New Years Spectacular

**Day 2:** (Im)moderation: Practicing Desire and Control

Film: Durian, Durian
Week 7: Work and Play

Day 1: Restaurant culture
   Reading: Yang, Mayfair 2004: Gifts, Favors and Banquets: the art of social relationships in China
   Slide show: Avant-garde artists depicting decadence

Day 2: KTV (karaoke parlors), bars, coffeeshops, bathhouses

   Film: Crazy Stone

Outline of Research Proposal Due to Teacher and Group Members for Comment

Week 8: The village as the city’s other

Day 1: We will watch fifteen-minute selections from “Happily Plowing the Fields, a story”, a TV show about contemporary rural life, and of the 2006 movie “A World Without Thieves”, to reflect on the—material and discursive—roles of “the villager” in urbanized Chinese life.

Day 2: Discussion of Day 1 video. Readings TBA

   Film: China 1972 (Documentary)

Draft of Research Proposal Due to Teacher and Group Members for Comment

Week 9: Discursive Walls

Day 1: The Commercialization of The Media and Government Censorship
   Zhao Yuezhi, 2008, “Communication in China” (Chs. 1, 2, 3)
   Excerpt from Documentary Film by Zhao Liang, “Petition”

Day 2: Propoganda (government buildboards and banners) vs. commercial advertisement on walls and television
   Reading: Geremie Barme, “CCP (TM) & ADCULT PRC” China Journal 41 1999
   Slide Show: Propaganda/Advertisement on the street in China
Week 10: Public Spheres

Day 1: Zhao Yuezhi, 2008, “Communication in China” (Ch.s 4, 5, 6)
Day 2: Through the Censors: AV (movies, DVDs, records), internet (blogs and online games), and print cultures (magazines and newspapers)
  Reading: Yang, G. “The Internet and civil society in China: A preliminary assessment” Journal of Contemporary China, 12(36), 453-475
  Golub and Lingley, “Just like the Qing Empire: Internet Addiction, MMOGs, and Moral Crisis in Contemporary China”
  Slide Show: Artist Cao Fei

Week 11: Print/Media and Satire

Day 1: Excerpts from Mo Yan’s novel, “The Republic of Wine” and Lu Xun, “Diary of a Madman”; discussion of bookshop culture in Beijing; video/audio of popular radio satire and skit comedy
Day 2: Chinese Internet Forums—looking at “Sina”, “Kaixinwang”, “Weibo” and other popular Chinese sites, and translations of posts from Han Han’s satirical blog

Week 12: Art, Design and Avant-Garde

Day 1: Readings and slide show on recent contemporary art
  Gao Minglu “The Wall” (PDF)
  Wu Hong “Exhibiting Experimental Art in China” (PDF)
Day 2: Readings and slide shows on new design and fashion

Week 13: Popular Music and the Underground

Day 1: Readings on pop and punk in China
Day 2: Video excerpts: “Supergirl” Singing Contest Television Show; Documentary, “Beijing Bubbles”


Day 1: Readings TBA
Day 2: Comparing the work of two directors: Feng Xiaogang and Jia Zhangke

Week 15: Concluding Discussions

Essays Due